THE DUTCH FLAT ENQUIRER.

THE PEOPLE'S NEWSPAPER:—Devoted to Rel[illegible], Politics, Education, Mining, and General Intelligence, Foreign and Domestic.—INDEPENDENT ON ALL SUBJECTS.

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Dutch Flat Enquirer.

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BY E. H. BOYNT,

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR,

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County Court and Court of Sessions.—E. H. Vanderbilt, Judge. Meets on the fourth Monday in January and May, and the second Monday in September.

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JUSTICES' AND LAWYERS' BLANKS FOR sale cheap, at this office.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

"There is a storm gathering [illegible] Beacon Hill; the air is heavy with [illegible]. Surely, Richard, it were better [illegible] your journey rest until to-morrow."

The tall, bronzed knight, [illegible] and spurred, with his hand upon [illegible] mane, turned to look with a mocking [illegible] fair, anxious face of the lady by his [illegible].

"And if the storm should [illegible] think, my sweet wife, that Dick Ca[illegible] never ridden through wind and [illegible] that, for fear of a wetting, I might [illegible] pledge to meet Philip Orme this [illegible] ter? No, no. Only let me find [illegible] for me here at noon to-morrow, [illegible] same pink cheeks and bright eyes [illegible] rock little whether I ride in the [illegible] shower. So now, dear one, farewell. [illegible] God bless you;" and springing [illegible] the gaunt knight waved a last adieu [illegible] away down the long avenue.

His young wife's blue eyes followed the [illegible] treating figure with a wistful [illegible] halted at the great iron gates, [illegible] through, was hidden from her eyes by [illegible] ly turning, she removed [illegible] led to the door of As[illegible] gloomy red brick wa[illegible] her as she entered, th[illegible] the hall threw a purple tint up[illegible] made it almost ghastly, and the [illegible] back a hollow echo to her [illegible] door at the further end of [illegible] opened, and Marston, the ol[illegible] took de her. Old he was [illegible] her fifty, his black hair [illegible] with gray, and there were [illegible] keen face. He stopped [illegible] glanced quickly at her, [illegible] and then said in a respectful [illegible] tone: "Surely, my lady, your will [illegible] ride to Chester on such a night?"

The lady looked up [illegible] his address[illegible] her. "Yes," said [illegible] just started. He laughed [illegible] weather, [illegible]."

"There will be little [illegible] storm rushes, if the river [illegible]," Marston [illegible] exclaimed abruptly. "If you [illegible] yet, my lady, are right."

"Nay, he must needs [illegible] ing," Lady Courthope [illegible], a sigh, she passed on [illegible]

The butler looked [illegible] have no fellows she [illegible] believes it. He has [illegible] for her; old friends, [illegible] now. Home to wound [illegible] Chester journey, but [illegible] all his plans, and hardships [illegible] them to me. But I [illegible] know—Sir Richard [illegible] night."

In the long, low dra[illegible] had already set in, [illegible] o'clock on a November [illegible] fire had burned low, [illegible] figures shed a wild [illegible] pictures on the walls, [illegible] chairs and carved tables [illegible] shadows all around, as [illegible] to the cushioned windo[illegible] on the stormy sky. [illegible] ts were fanned; the [illegible] murmured to herself: [illegible] evil?" She looked [illegible] room, and started as a [illegible] a crash upon the hearth [illegible] her to hear again her husband's [illegible] see his fond glance, [illegible] her; and then gradually [illegible] ed away from the [illegible] other, far away at Ke[illegible] young voices, smiling [illegible] voice, her face had [illegible] tween the gayest and [illegible] been a cherished [illegible] Sir Richard Courthope [illegible] and brought her [illegible] Cheshire home. [illegible] young brothers and [illegible] of her happy [illegible] they yet missed her [illegible] speaking of her [illegible] fancy took another [illegible] her fond remembr[illegible] absent husband, [illegible] any of that merry [illegible] this strange sadness [illegible] With a sudden impa[illegible] the glowing embers [illegible] down beside her [illegible] sir; then her mood [illegible] of some martial [illegible] Once she paused [illegible] ing the tall, silver [illegible] she died away, she [illegible] against the casem[illegible] wind among the [illegible] then her fingers [illegible] storm has come, [illegible] who spoke. She [illegible] he was standing [illegible] Richard can never, [illegible] he went on.

"What will he [illegible] with startled eyes.

"He may make [illegible] dy; as I had [illegible] meet him with a [illegible] as pitch, and as [illegible] would be death [illegible] ergetic in his tone and in his [illegible] with anxiety; "and yet—might [illegible] Stephen in your stead?" She [illegible] she asked that question, she [illegible] and some ring of feeling prompted it. [illegible] face darkened. "He is a stranger [illegible], while I have lived here from [illegible]. He does not even know the [illegible] I have ridden along it hundreds of [illegible] night and day. But be it as you will, [illegible]self," she once more repeated; [illegible] moment. Heaven send you may [illegible] Sir Richard."

[illegible] turned silently to obey her orders. [illegible] reached the door he looked round; [illegible] instant his eyes met hers—only for [illegible] but there was something in that [illegible] peculiar, so sinister, that she almost [illegible]. Ere she could recover her first [illegible] she could speak or think, he was [illegible]. What did it mean? She had long known [illegible] her as good will, that he regarded [illegible] introduce in her husband's house, and [illegible] bitterly resented the stern rebukes, and [illegible] could he be plotting harm? Should she follow [illegible], and countermand his going? And then again she smiled at her own needless terrors, [illegible] surely he would not dare to [illegible]. That cliff path might indeed be [illegible] the old and trusted servant. So [illegible], in less than half an hour, she [illegible] hoofs crashing on the paved [illegible] not hear something else; she [illegible] his muttered words, as he glanced [illegible] lighted winnows of the drawing [illegible] would have stopped me had she [illegible] cannot stop me now. There [illegible] hearty reckoning this night for the [illegible] has made Sir Richard bear upon [illegible] his teeth were ground with some [illegible] curse.

[illegible] Courthope, sitting thoughtfully beside [illegible] eyes fixed upon the leaping flames, [illegible] lying idly in her lap, was [illegible] nearly two hours later Stephen came [illegible] supper called. She asked him, as [illegible] if the storm still raged without. "It [illegible], my lady, and the sky [illegible]." She [illegible] and drew and the cur[illegible] moon shone bright on pool and hill [illegible], with a light step went her [illegible] the supper room.

[illegible] evening were away; a great clock [illegible] had long since struck nine, and [illegible] were nearing ten, when Lady Court[illegible] Chester journey, but [illegible] all his plans, and hardships [illegible] them to me. But I [illegible] know—Sir Richard [illegible] night."

"I feared not keep watch for Sir [illegible] trust, ere now safe in Ches[illegible] looked the river while it [illegible]."

"If there were swollen, my lady, he [illegible] had to pass to the old stone bridge [illegible]," the girl said quickly.

"The bridge! heard of no bridge!" ex[illegible] Courthope.

"The bridge—a matter of three [illegible]; but Sir Richard knows it [illegible]."

"Had forgotten it," said her [illegible] of the lord," Hester ans[illegible] said that he was going to ride [illegible]."

"Come back!" Lady Courthope [illegible] lady; he told us that if he did [illegible], he should stay at the [illegible] morning."

"[illegible] news," and there was [illegible] in Lady Courthope's [illegible] followed, while the maid [illegible], assisting her mistress [illegible] brought the taffeta dress [illegible] slippers, Lady Courthope [illegible] said kindly: "That will do; I can brush my own hair for this night. Now go, and sleep off your headache."

The maid [illegible] a while, but at a second bidding she withdrew, thankful to be released. Lady Courthope [illegible], to secure the door; then returning, she drew an arm chair close to the fire, and leaning back in it began to [illegible] on her shining braids of hair. Well for her [illegible] were moving dreamily among the golden tresses, as they fell around her lovely face, she sat thinking of many things; she thought of her husband, the husband who seemed yet dearer to her heart for that very difference of age which had in so many marred the marriage; she thought of his tender indulgence towards her faults, of his almost fatherly care, yet of the manly respect and trust with which he treated her—of the perfect confidence which he, the man of forty-five, showed to the wife more than twenty years younger than himself. And then she pictured the coming years, and the time when his hair should be white, and his now upright figure bent; and when she in turn should show her love and gratitude by her unwearied care—when she should forestall his every wish, and make his declining age as [illegible] chance to shout them, make the house, as quiet as now, ring with laughter from morn to night; and all that picture rose before her, she yearned to lay her head upon her husband's breast, and whisper it to him.

It was so strange to be here, far from him. If she could but leave this lonely, silent room, and mount her horse, and gallop through the darkness to that inn at Chester. That vague dread was coming back to her again. The fire was dying down, and the room seemed darker, and a cold chill crept over her frame. The dread grew. The ivory brush upon her knee slid down, and fell with a dull, heavy sound upon the floor; she stooped hastily to relish it, but as she raised her face, all veiled by her long drooping hair, she saw, away by the window in the furthest corner of the room, a bony hand grasping the fringed edge of the damask curtain, and a white eager face peering from behind it, intently watching her. One instant and the curtain fell to again softly, silently, and that face was gone. But she had seen it, and she knew it. Not six hours ago, that same look of hatred and revenge had been turned upon her, and with a sickening heart she recognized the fierce eyes, the lowering brows, and knew at last what that look meant. She did not start or cry. Her pulse throbbed wildly, her very blood was chilled; but she sat on calmly, quietly; she had trembled at the bare thought of peril to her husband, but now in her own fearful danger she was brave and steadfast. Her icy hands still with her bright hair, her eyes were bent vacantly upon the dying embers, and there was no outward sign of the tumult within; and yet she knew and understood all. Marston was there close by her. His night journey had been but a feint to hide his deadly purpose and to screen himself. He had stolen back in the darkness, and hidden there to wait for her, and—murder her. And he might murder her. Here alone in this locked room, how could she escape him? If she fled, if she could even gain the gallery outside, it would avail her little. Long, long before she could pass those deserted rooms, before her voice could summon any to her aid, he would be upon her, his fingers at her throat. And then there came across her a strange memory of how one summer she had seen him standing on the garden terrace twisting in his hands a piece of rope—how he had wound it round and round until the strained fingers were stiff and rigid, and how then his iron fingers had been bent for one more effort, and when the last turn was given, the rope was left hanging idly on his arm. A strange thing to recall at such a time as this, stranger still that she should almost shudder in recalling it. What, if rising from her chair, she were to go straight to that window, and drawing back the curtain, confront him there, and in her husband's, in his master's name were Appeal to him for pity! Ah, no; that name from her lips would but inflame his jealousy and hate. She raised her eyes, and they rested on something bright and glittering, something which just then almost seemed a friend; for there above the chimney piece, within reach of her hand, hung her husband's rapier. She [illegible] it, and, with one wild dash, stab her enemy ere he could free himself from those concealing folds; but her woman's soul shrank from the deed even in this her dire extremity. In that upward glance, another thought had come into her mind—her dressing room! The door stood open, not ten paces from her. Once locked in there—but alas! there was neither bolt nor bar, and the key turned on the outside. Her heart almost sank within her. Already she seemed to hear stealthy steps upon the floor, behind, around her, to feel hot breath upon her cheek, and still she sat on quietly. Was there no escape for her? Once again her eyes fell on the open door of the dressing room.

There are moments in life when every power of the mind is unnaturally strained, and when ideas and plans which at another time might be the work of weary hours, are formed in one short instant. As she looked at the dressing room door and the key on the outside, a scheme flashed across her, bringing back the life blood to her cheek, sending fresh hope to her heart. If she could but decoy him into that room—decoy him, as she has seen birds and dogs decoyed by some tempting bait. She has a bait. He had come for his revenge, but she knows there is another passion strong in him, and that passion is avarice. Often has she seen his eyes brighten at the touch of gold; often has Sir Richard laughingly said that the one fault of his old and faithful servant was the love of money; and now, if through that love she can beguile him first to the dressing room, she may yet be saved. The part before her was hard and perilous, but she could trust herself to play it. She knew that if her nerve once failed, her doom was sealed, but the brave young heart did not quail. Slowly and deliberately she fastened up her hair, then rising from her seat, threw fresh logs upon the fire, and crossing the room, laid her brush upon the dressing table. Some hooks were lying there; she took up one of them, turned the leaves carelessly, then throwing it down, exhibited in a low tone: "Too tired to read, and yet not tired enough to sleep; I wish the night were over." She yawned wearily, waited a moment, as though to doubt, then muttering: "By the by, those emeralds," took a bunch of keys from the table, and went towards a small ebony cabinet inlaid with silver which stood beside the fireplace. Her voice had not faltered. No tone could have betrayed that she had seen that [illegible] figure, and that her words were [illegible]

She unlocked the cabinet, and from one corner drew out a small satin wood box—her jewel box; laying it on the floor beside her, she stooped to arrange the other boxes which she had displaced, and then fastening the cabinet, returned to the dressing table, and lifted one of the lighted candlesticks. With the box in one hand, the candlestick and keys in the other, she advanced towards the dressing room door. Just as she reached it, a board behind her creaked sharply and suddenly, and her heart stood still. Was he following her, tempted too soon by the vastly prize? Was the moment come? No; all was again still and silent as the grave. She went on, on to the further end of the long narrow dressing room, leaving the door still set wide. She put the jewel box and candlestick upon a table; she stood where her every movement might be seen from the dark corner where he was hiding, and then unfastening the box, she layed out the various trays, and spread the glittering trinkets all round her. One by one she lifted them, holding them close to the light, moving them to and fro, so that the precious stones might sparkle in the blaze, and then carefully polishing them, put them back. For nearly half an hour she stood trifling now with one, now with another, her fingers busied in rubbing and arranging, her ear strained for any sound, her heart leaping as the flickering candle threw sudden shadows on the walls; and still there was no movement in the dim chamber beyond. She must return there now, for she could stand no longer, her knees would scarcely support her; her strength seemed ebbing, and that fiercest conquest was too terrible to fail. For one half instant she paused to gather breath; then, with a weary sigh, she laid aside the bracelet she was holding, and raising her candle, moved towards the bedroom. On the threshold she stopped, retreated a step or two, and seemed hesitate. If she had seen how at that instant the hand behind the curtain was tightening its grasp upon the knife it held, and the crouching form was making ready for a spring—if she had seen this, even her courage might have failed—but she did not see it, and she played out the play. Murmuring in a low steady tone—"No matter for to-night," she came on into her chamber, leaving the jewels scattered about the table, and the door standing open. And now the trap was set, and she might rest and watch.

Hastily extinguishing the lights she drew aside the bed curtains, and lay down. There was a strange repose after that long and fearful self restraint in lying motionless in the fitful firelight, her aching limbs stretched out, her weary head resting on the pillow—a strange repose, even though for it was so near life. The minutes passed away, the deep boom of the clock struck out twelve, and still all was quiet, save for the click of the embers in the hearth, and the distant baying of the dogs on the court yard. With closed eyes, drawing deep breath, as though asleep, she lay listening. It seemed as if she had lain there many hours, when at last there was a faint stir in that corner. He coming out now. She dared not look or move, but she heard—she heard the dull fall of the curtain, the stealthy, cautious footsteps on the floor. Was he going to the dressing room? No—Heaven help her—he was coming to her bed. The steps came on, nearer, nearer; something brushed against the bed clothes, then stopped close beside her. Her eyes were closed, her breath still came softly through her parted lips, but within that statue-like form there was a human soul praying in mortal anguish for herself, and comfort for her widowed husband. A pause—then another slight movement. He was bending over her; his hand was pressing the pillow; then something cold and sharp was lightly laid across her throat.—The last pang had come, and she had no power now to move or cry. One moment more, and she would be at peace. But the moment passed, and she still lived. Another moment, and that cold pressure was gone. His breath was no longer on her face, yet he was still there; she felt him alarting, she knew that he was watching her. Long he watched, then, muttering low—"My hand shakes; I'll wait a while," he turned away. She heard him turn, she heard his footsteps slowly receding from the bed, but the sound brought no relief; she was past that; she had felt the death-pange and she almost longed that the knife had done its work, and brought her release from that long torture; but the end had not come yet. He was going to the dressing-room. Once, twice, he stopped, as though listening; then he went on again; and now he was moving something on the dressing-table. There was a faint rattle, a dead pause, then again that stealthy tread.—She strove to open her eyes; but they seemed sealed, and it needed a convulsive effort to unclose them. She did unclose them, and she saw him.

The room was very dark still, but by the faint glimmer of the dressing-room, and the figure standing within it. The trap had taken—the jewels had lured him. He turned his head, and her life fell instantly, though she lay hidden in the deep shadow of the heavy bedstead. When she looked again, he was standing where she had stood an hour ago. There was light in the dressing room, for he held a blazing match, and a candle burned upon the table by his side. She could see him plainly now, his tall square form, his long arms, but not his face, for his back was towards her.—Casting away the burned match, he bent over the table, and softly swept the jewels toward him. This was her time. It would be but the [illegible]

[illegible] second spell-bound. That frightful moment when the steel had touched her neck had paralyzed her powers, and an unspeakable horror was upon her. She struggled with that horror; she thought of her husband, of all to whom her life was precious, and with one inward prayer for strength, for courage, she slipped noiselessly on to the floor.

He had not heard her: his head was still bent—his fingers were still busy with the jewels—. Bare footed, her eyes fixed upon his figure, she stole on, softly groping her way towards the door, past the end of the bed, by the dressing-table; she was close upon it now, her hand was stretched out to grasp the handle—there were but two more steps to take, when her foot struck with a dull sound against an unnoticed stool, and she stumbled; she recovered herself instantly; but, faint as the noise was, his ear had caught it, and he turned and saw her. For one moment they stood face to face gazing upon each other, then they both made for the door. She was the nearer of the two, and she was there first; she had laid of it; she pushed it to, but ere she could turn the key his fingers were upon the other handle. It was a struggle for life and death—a struggle between a strong man and a desperate woman. It could not last long. Inch by inch the door was yielding to his pressure, when, gathering all her strength for a last effort, with a power beyond her own she forced it home. It closed; the key rattled round in the lock, and, with a wild, hoarse scream, she fell back upon the floor. She was still conscious; she heard him beating on the strong oak panels in his vain fury; she heard his passionate imprecations; and after a while other sounds, too, reached her ear—hurrying feet in the gallery; many voices outside her door. That piercing cry had roused every sleeper in the house, and they were all gathered there now, entreating admittance. She rose, she tottered across the room, and let them in; and as they came striding her, gazing horror stricken at her wild face, her blanched lips, she panted out her tale, ever pointing to that inner door; then laying her head on Hester's shoulder, and moaning out, "O husband, save me!" swooned away.

It was still early, on the morning of the following day, when Sir Richard, followed by a groom, galloped up the beech avenue. The white autumn mist hung like a shroud over the park, the golden leaves fell in showers around him, but he noted them not as with spur and whip, he urged on his flagging steed. His ruddy face was as pale as death—his eyes were fixed on the walls of his home, her home—his teeth were set in dread anxiety, for he knew all. They had sent to summon him, and since he left Chester he had not once drawn rein. He was here at last, at his own door, and, throwing himself off his exhausted horse, he flung the reins to his servant and sprang up the steps. No one was there to welcome him. All [illegible] still and quiet. Without—the [illegible] red sun struggling through the mist, [illegible] leaves. Within—the dark old hall, the [illegible] sadly watching for him, and his [illegible] sweeping. He looked from one to another, [illegible] his parched tongue slowly formed the [illegible] "Where is she?" They led him to the [illegible] where she was lying; but when he knelt [illegible] her, and pressed his quivering lips upon [illegible] forced in on, she only greeted him with a [illegible] laugh, and, gazing at him vacantly, began again her miserable rambling talk of emeralds and keys, lonely rooms and glittering knives. For a while he lingered, looking down upon her haggard face, softly stroking her tangled hair, then, unable to endure it longer, hurried away. They wanted him elsewhere, for Marston was still in the house, and had asked to see him.—But Sir Richard shook his head; he dared not trust himself just now near that man—let them carry him away far from his sight. There was nothing fresh to hear, for Marston had already told all—how his first dislike had deepened into deadly hatred, and how, finding that Sir Richard would be absent, he had resolved to wreak his hatred, enrich himself and flee; how, feigning that night journey, and leaving his horse some three miles off, he had returned unseen to the house. He had to do the deed, and then, escaping with what treasure he could find, he [illegible] upon his way to London he [illegible] mysterious broke. His horse was [illegible]

(Concluded on the fourth [illegible])